



# Friends and Families Matter

From Heartbreak to Healing  
Support for those coping with the incarceration of a loved one

Law and Justice Meeting  
September 3, 2014

September 3, 2013

## Exhibit 9

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Law and Justice Interim Committee:

My name is Janee Weber. I am here with Shari Rigg representing Friends and Families Matter, a community-based non-profit organization working to develop support groups for those coping with the incarceration of a loved one.

We have offered testimony before on most of the bills you will take final action on today. But there have been some changes and a few new bills, so we appreciate the opportunity to offer new testimony. First, we would like to further explain who we are and what we are about.

When your spouse and parenting partner is incarcerated, you become a single parent left to pick up the wreckage and raise your family alone. You feel betrayed, afraid, and overwhelmed. When a father or mother is incarcerated, their children feel confused, abandoned, and insecure. When a son or daughter is incarcerated, as a parent, you struggle to understand what went wrong and how to fix it, but you feel completely helpless, ashamed, and misunderstood. If you are a brother, sister, or friend, you may feel abandoned, angry, and worried. The range of emotions and the ups and downs are extreme, and are triggered again and again with each phone call, visit, or letter exchanged with your incarcerated family member.

In the midst of this turmoil, friends and families must navigate a complex and intimidating correctional system. Although there are phone numbers in the Department of Corrections directory, no one person or position is dedicated to helping family members navigate the various correctional policies, find answers when questions arise, or disseminate information when the rules change. When help and information is not readily available or rules and procedures are misunderstood, the frustration, anxiety, and distrust builds and there is tension between them and the Department. Friends and family members find themselves with no comfortable alternative to relying on the information they get from their loved ones inside the system, which may not be complete or accurate.

Our group reaches out to these friends and families to provide support, understanding, and information. We have also reached out to the Department of Corrections so we can develop open, clear, and positive lines of communication. We are grateful that the Department of Corrections has been receptive to us and we want to publically thank Director Batista and his government relations specialist, Adrienne Slaughter, for meeting with us as we map a way forward.

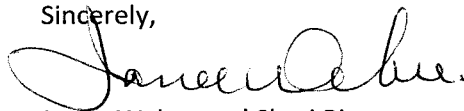
The bills you are considering today under your SJR 3 study will affect friends and families coping with the incarceration of a loved one. We have studied and discussed these bill drafts. Our

position on each one is reflected in the following chart. For purposes of the meeting record, we will offer our public comment on these bill drafts as you have them grouped and scheduled on your agenda.

Draft Number	Short Title	Comments
LCIj94	Clarify that the governor may change the parole board presiding officer.	<b>We support</b> this bill and think it will help clarify the governor's oversight.
LCIj93	Generally revise laws relating to the parole board presiding officer.	<b>We support</b> making the presiding officer of the board a full-time salaried position to allow the presiding officer to gain a more in-depth knowledge of all facets of parole and to provide for more direct supervision of agency staff.
LCIj92	Increase the size of the parole board.	<b>We support</b> this bill, but request that it also include a provision that the hearing panels consist of at least three members rather than only two. In an ideal world, the whole board would participate in each hearing to gain the perspective of all members, but we would at least like to see three members on each panel.
LCIj91	Prohibit the parole board from requiring treatment or programming if not required by the sentencing judge	<b>We support</b> this bill, but request that the title of the bill be more general to allow for tweaks during the session. The inserted language in the bill may be too broad. Our specific concerns were about the board requiring treatment, such as SOP II, when the treatment was not required by the judge or recommended by a licensed treatment professional and with the board requiring completion of boot camp when the program was not required by the judge or an inmate did not request the opportunity because of concern about failing due to the physical demands of the program.
LCIj90	Revise executive clemency laws.	<b>We support</b> this bill. The clemency hearing and clemency decision should be made by the governor.
LCIj98	Revise MAPA provisions related to the Board	<b>We support</b> this bill. It will allow for more scrutiny of the Board's rules and ensure that rules are drafted within the scope of authority granted to the Board.
LCIj97B	Require parole hearings to be video recorded	<b>We strongly support</b> video recordings rather than audio only recordings because body language and facial expressions are essential to providing accurate context. However, video should only be of the inmate and the Board members, not of victims or friends and family members. Also, there should be a provision protecting the inmate's privacy rights.
LCIj95	Revise parole criteria	<b>We support</b> this bill. While we have some concerns about the criteria themselves, we believe the criteria should be set in statute by the legislature.
LCIj51	Revising housing laws for offenders	We have no position on this bill.
LCIj52	Revise inmate worker reentry costs	<b>We oppose</b> requiring inmates to save a certain amount of their earnings to pay for reentry costs. While we understand the good intent, without coordinating this change with other financial demands place on inmates, this will place a heavy burden on inmates and their families. Inmates do not earn much and what they do earn is already required by law to be used to pay restitution and court-imposed fees. The little that remains, if any, is usually not enough even to pay for their clothing and toiletries, which inmates are required to purchase themselves. Families must send inmates money just so they have clothing, shoes, socks, shaving kits, tooth brushes, tooth paste, and even toilet paper, etc.
LCIj50	Interim Study of CCC and DOC oversight	<b>We support</b> this bill. See our letter submitted separately.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,



Janee Weber and Shari Rigg  
FAFM Board Members